



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Patient Centered Medical Home: Military medicine transforms

For most people, home is the place to see a familiar face, feel comfortable, and talk about the things in your life.

It's exactly how Fort Carson-MEDDAC wants you to feel about the place where you get your health care. How will that happen? The Army is inviting you to be part of the Patient-Centered Medical Home.

The PCMH model is being implemented Army-wide. It is a new approach designed to improve access and continuity of care. The concept creates medical homes, or clinics, that focus on acting as a small Family practice. Beneficiaries at a medical home get their very own core team made up of their primary care provider (a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner), licensed practical nurses and registered nurses. The idea is that patients will get a group of caregivers who know them well and a personalized care plan that is unique to them.

"It's patient focused. The patient is the center of the team and we are all around that person," said Col. Robert Rudolphi. "It's a comprehensive approach that addresses the mind, body and spirit."

Fort Carson caregivers are in the midst of intense training and implementation of PCMH. Through practices like team "huddles" about the upcoming day to much more contact time with patients, caregivers say this radically changes how they work.

Rudolphi explained, "I like the concept of working as a team. It should free up time for providers to really communicate with patients."

Patients will begin to see a number of changes as PCMH takes hold. Maj. Ramona Decker, Army nurse, says beneficiaries will have a lot more time with nurses as they conduct screenings and prepare a patient for a provider.

"This allows us to work at the top of our licenses," Decker explained. "Appointments are more comprehensive and we can build trusting relationships with our patients. We want to be their partner in health care."

Decker says beneficiaries will also find access to care becomes broader and easier. The PCMH model calls for communication between the patient and provider through non-traditional means. The face-to-face interaction is supplemented by telephone, video or secure email messaging. The secure messaging site allows beneficiaries to see lab results, x-rays, and send messages to their provider. The site also has health education information and worksheets.



Caregivers say PCMH also requires a transformation to a more active role on the part of beneficiaries.

“We want them to own their health care. We want them to express their concerns and follow up on their referrals. This is about more than acute concerns. Care improves as you get to know your team and we can focus on wellness,” said Decker.

Rudolphi added, “It’s a reformation for everyone. It’s a journey that will take practice and we want patients to take responsibility as well.”

Three Fort Carson-MEDDAC clinics are already applying for certification from the National Committee for Quality Assurance under the PCMH model. Rudolphi says the other clinics are in various stages of implementing the plan.

This is the first in a series of articles from caregivers at Fort Carson MEDDAC that will explain the Patient Centered Medical Home to beneficiaries.

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